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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

SPECIAL EVALUATION REPORT



Office Evaluated National Office, Fire-Law Enforcement-Aviation
and the National Interagency Fire Center

Conducted by The Washington Office

Dates September 26-30, 1994

Fire-Law Enforcement-Aviation
Special Evaluation
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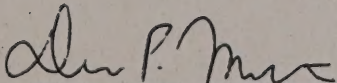
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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)
FIRE-LAW ENFORCEMENT-AVIATION,
SPECIAL EVALUATION
September 26-30, 1994

INTRODUCTION

At the request of the BLM Director, a Special Evaluation was conducted of the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) and the BLM Washington Office Resource Protection Directorate (National Office), located at the NIFC, which has national program responsibility for fire, law enforcement, and aviation. For the purpose of this report both divisions will be referred to as the Boise Center and the top management team is defined as the Assistant Director, Resource Protection, the NIFC Director, and Division Chiefs. The objectives of the evaluation were:

1. To determine staff satisfaction with management direction and effectiveness of internal communication.
2. To determine management's support and emphasis of various human resource program issues.
3. To provide management an objective assessment on the Boise Center's overall efficiency and effectiveness in managing its programs, personnel, and coordination in achieving its assigned objectives.

This report represents the results of the Special Evaluation conducted September 26-30, 1994. The evaluation included an on-site visit to the Boise Center and interviews with all of the employees that wished to be interviewed either in a group setting or individually. Over 140 employees were interviewed in groups and over 20 individual interviews were conducted. Other interviews were conducted with the Acting National Fire Officer from the Forest Service, the Fire Officer of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service lead at the National Interagency Coordination Center. The interview question guide solicited comments from interviewees concerning the Boise Centers overall management direction and leadership effectiveness, internal communication, management controls, and EEO and harassment issues. The results of the employee questionnaire, which they responded to in July 1994, were made available to employees at the All Employees Meeting on September 26, 1994 and is appended to this Special Evaluation report.

BACKGROUND

In October 1992, the BLM Washington Office organizationally co-located the national fire, aviation, and law enforcement programs with the NIFC in Boise, Idaho. Until that time, the NIFC, which is the nation's logistical support center for wildfire suppression, had existed in Boise, Idaho without these national programs. The BLM NIFC has also had a lead role in interagency cooperation with its five cooperators at the Center. Fiscal Year funding for the Boise Center was approximately \$21 million and staffing for the Center is about 200 full time positions with only a few vacancies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation team was impressed with the caliber of employees at the Boise Center. The team believes that the staff can be generally characterized as communicative, collaborative, committed, well focused, very hard working and dedicated. Specific work groups take the initiative to try new ideas, communicate decisions, and are encouraged to cut across division lines in order to accomplish specific tasks, and appreciate it when management leaves them alone to do their work. The evaluation team and the employees recognize that there are some effective managers at the division and supervisory level and that these individuals are trying and have successfully incorporated appropriate management and leadership principles. However, the pockets of excellence are far over shadowed by top management's lack of attention to leading and managing the Boise Center.

It is very clear from the results of the questionnaire and employee interviews that the National Office and the NIFC management teams are minimally effective at planning, directing, and controlling the resources of these offices. Two-thirds of the respondents disagreed with fourteen of eighteen items/questions, in the employee questionnaire, that dealt with quality management issues and there was a majority disagreement in yet another three items/questions dealing with quality issues. As such, respondents indicated a majority of disagreement in all but one item/question in the quality management section of the employee questionnaire.

No other survey given to any other BLM State or Center has been this negative. As expected, the morale of the work force is seriously low. Nearly 80% of the employees that responded to the questionnaire said that the RPMT does not foster an atmosphere that enhances employee morale. The evaluation team found that employee morale was seriously tainted by factors such as a lack of clear long term direction for both the NIFC and National Office; misunderstanding and lack of a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between the NIFC and the National Office; minimal involvement by employees in the decision making process and sometimes no explanation of why decisions were made; confusion over priorities; insufficient communication and information sharing throughout the organization; questionable management controls in security, financial and property management; lack of consistent treatment among employees and resolution of harassment cases and a lack of clear understanding of the complaint process, and inconsistency and inequitable distribution of training dollars and opportunities for training. Employees believe that overall improvement in leading, management direction, internal communications, sharing management decisions and being involved in decisions that affect them, and stronger management controls are critical to improving morale in this office.

Unfortunately, most of these same issues were reported in the 1990 Boise Interagency Fire Center General Management Evaluation. Even though the NIFC GME Followup showed that management had completed the corrective actions of the 1990 GME report, a number of factors have probably contributed to the resurfacing of the previous problems. These factors include, 1992 co-location of the subject National Office with the NIFC, change in leadership, some changes in the management team, overall increase in workload in an environment of staff reductions, ineffectiveness of the 1990 evaluation corrective actions, and changes in the working conditions at the Center.

Even though the questionnaire scores for work units and work unit supervision were in the normal range of performance, most of the items under "work unit supervision" were border line "potential problem areas." Interviews with employees substantiated this finding. It is important to recognize that improvements must be made by mid-level managers and supervisors immediately to avoid problems later.

Employees also recognize the NIFC is poised to and should proceed in its effort to increase its effectiveness in interagency cooperation.

The scope of recommendations by the team included establishing long term direction and clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the National Office and the NIFC, improvement in overall office communication and human resource related issue systems, i.e., EEO, sexual harassment, and safety. The team also recommends administrative or management control reviews of financial and property management systems, and hazardous materials management.

The issues of this evaluation are most basic and yet are positively essential management and leadership skills and/or duties that are paramount to effective employee productivity and are necessary to successfully lead and manage any office. Focusing in on the leadership and management concepts in this evaluation is critical to turning the NIFC and the National Office around and creating a positive collaborative work force that is in alignment with the current headquarters management philosophy.

Findings and Recommendations

CHAPTER I

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Worksheet 1.

Mission and Priorities

Findings:

The team found that BLM's national level programs of Fire, Aviation, and Law Enforcement have failed to effectively develop, implement, and articulate their organizational mission. Consequently, employees on all levels, including management, professional, and support staff, remain confused as to the overall goals and objectives of the organization.

Employees have not always been so unsure of their organizational identity. The current situation evolved as a direct result of the downsizing and co-locating the National Office with the Boise Interagency Fire Center (BIFC) in 1992. Prior to that time, BIFC functioned primarily as an interagency fire suppression center. As such, its mission was clearly defined.

In 1992, a new BLM management structure was installed at the Boise Center to administer the expanded responsibilities brought on with downsizing. However, clarification of the organization's newly created mission did not follow, priorities were not established, and team building did not occur. In fact, quite the opposite happened.

During our interviews with employees, the team was unable to ascertain whether or not management had developed a strategic plan, understood its mission, or linked priorities to an annual work plan. If this had occurred, it certainly was never conveyed to divisional managers, and was invisible to the remainder of the staff. Rather than following a planned approach, crisis management appeared to be the rule. Overall, work groups accomplished their perceived tasks in relative isolation. There is no clear understanding of what management does and how it relates to the rest of the office. BLM's collective mission remains in flux. Similarly, its employees are confused and uncertain of their personal future, and the future of BLM operations at the Center.

Recommendation:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Develop and/or clarify the vision and overall mission for the National Office and the NIFC.
2. Develop a strategic plan, establish priorities, and prepare an annual work plan which allocates both funding and human resources to organizational units based on established priorities. Coordination with the Bureau of Land Management's headquarters personnel and cooperating agencies is strongly suggested.

Findings:

Management has not adequately defined the roles and responsibilities for the consolidated BLM management teams at the Boise Center. This has resulted in significant employee confusion over who is in charge.

With the consolidation of the national fire, law enforcement, and aviation programs with the NIFC, authority and responsibility became blurred. Because there were no clear lines of authority, it became unclear as to who was actually making the decisions. The lack of clear lines of authority has resulted in productivity losses, duplication of effort, and a lowering of employee morale. According to employees, during the last two years, no attempts have been made by management to communicate the chain of command or delegate decision authorities. Frustration has resulted.

Recommendation:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

Clearly define the roles, responsibilities, lines of authority and delegated decision-making authorities within the management team, and effectively communicate them to its employees.

Findings:

Only a very small group of people participated in decision making processes. This group was viewed as an inner circle of favored persons who regularly excluded other managers from fully participating in decisions. This group has commonly been referred to as a "good ole' boys" network. The prevailing attitude is that affected parties are routinely and actively excluded from participation in key decisions that impact them. This perception is reinforced because the full management team does not meet to discuss priorities, budget allocations, or other general management issues. As a result, some employees feel helpless and greatly impaired in meeting the mission of the Center. Employees largely believe there is a lack of clarity in the common purpose, which has resulted in frustration and low morale.

In some areas, such as position classification and recruitment, top management often made no decisions. Employees reported instances where the documentation to support position re-classification was completed and then taken to management but to no avail. Some employees are still waiting for approval two years after having submitted the re-classification documentation.

There was some concern expressed by the NIFC staff that funding was being held centrally, and they had considerable difficulty getting approval to process requisitions, training, awards, etc. that they felt were needed for their programs. Many employees and managers expressed concern that large central purchases for things like office furnishings for the new building, signage, and aircraft repainting could have been redirected to higher mission priorities. These concerns reflect, at a minimum, limited involvement in priority setting and decision making, and perhaps indicate a need for review of financial procedures and controls. In general, NIFC financial management reports for FY 1993 and 1994 show a distribution across divisions and among object classes including those that would typically support requisitions and purchase orders. However, funding allocation and control procedures were not specifically evaluated.

Employees from nearly every unit reported that priorities were set on a crisis management basis with regular work performed as an afterthought. Additionally, employees were sometimes given little advance notice of overtime, affecting their ability to address personal needs. They believe that their supervisors can anticipate the need for overtime at least several days in advance. Employees believe that consultation regarding the need, versus dictation that employees must appear on weekends, should be done more often. It was often reported that divisions are behind in the performance of their regular duties, and there was virtually no consultation or support from the management ranks in addressing these concerns.

Furthermore, top management practiced a general "hands off" policy in day to day operations. While this may be fitting in theory, some management team members did not take time to learn the programs well or to consult with the people doing the work, and continued to retain full decision-making functions. Numerous employees reported that inner circle decisions resulted in FTE shifts from the NIFC to the National Program to the detriment of the NIFC's service-oriented mission.

Even though the management team attended an off-site planning session and did establish goals and objectives, that work was not carried forward in any uniform fashion to employees. There was no evidence that this work was visibly linked to decision processes.

The Special Evaluation Questionnaire results show a high percentage of disagreement (72%) when asked whether "management decisions are made based on

reliable information, data, and analysis." This result is consistent with the responses given in group and individual interviews. Employees widely believe that an exclusionary, non-communicative, and politically based system for decision making is detrimental to their effectively participating in furthering the Center's mission.

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Task a work group to develop a reliable mechanism that ensures employee participation in decision making processes.
2. Provide a reliable mechanism for informing employees of decisions, including the rational, that are made by management and supervisors and what actions are to be taken or expected.
3. Conduct a financial management Management Control Review that is comprehensive enough to measure effectiveness of the controls that ensures authorized purchases, proper accounting principals, and financial accountability.

Worksheet 4. Linkage Between Field and Center Priorities

Findings:

There was a feeling among some BLM employees at the Boise Center that the BLM fire program was moving away from operating in a true interagency cooperative mode. As a result, the Center's reputation in customer service may suffer. Various employees who take calls from the field are often told that these persons are uncertain as to whom to contact to address their needs. These callers from the field attribute their confusion to multiple recent reorganizations. Furthermore, some employees stated that upon reporting field needs, management was not only unresponsive, but expressed knowing better than the field what the field needs were.

Employees expressed that there is not a clear understanding within BLM of the full scope of the jobs that are being accomplished here. There are national and interagency components to the products produced for the field, but there is no focus from management as to how this fits into an interagency mission.

Other agencies (FWS, NPS) have asked for help and for a better coordination of effort but certain divisions are reluctant to get involved because of a lack of Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) to address such requests. These employees believe this shows a lack of regard for the interagency mission of the Center. They also believe that not having clear guidance about how to work as an interagency group creates internal conflicts in allocating resources to accomplish their work and to adequately service the needs of the field.

Employees believe that management of the Center has moved away from an interagency mission orientation and has stressed BLM as the decision-maker. These same employees expressed that such a change has resulted in a strained relationship with the other agencies and co-operators. Interviews with two of the cooperators substantiated the claims of these employees. In addition, employees stated that the goodwill that developed in pursuing the interagency mission has eroded in past years.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group provides funding, for specific work that is requested, to various divisions at the Center. If the perceived move away from an interagency cooperative mission continues, employees can expect to experience increased difficulty and conflict in trying to reconcile BLM's current emphasis at the Center with the interagency mission.

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Revisit the missions and goals of the NIFC and the National Office. Ensure that a clear statement exists that establishes the NIFC's interagency mission as it relates to the National Programs housed at the Boise Center, the Department of the Interior, and its customer service requirements to the field.
2. Review the interagency suppression and support services duties and responsibilities. Where coordination and elimination of duplication of effort is possible, appropriate steps should be taken to do so, but in accordance with the mission statement resulting from Recommendation 1 above.
3. Develop a plan for reviewing requests from customers in the field, and where appropriate, take steps to accommodate such requests.

Worksheet 5. Management Controls - Security

Findings:

Security measures and systems at the Center have loosened significantly. This change has greatly increased the potential threat of loss and damage to government property and to personal safety. The Center is oftentimes left open to the risk of on-site theft, vandalism, and endangerment of its employees.

Examples include: employees reported that three cars had been broken into and there was unauthorized use of government property and equipment by employees. Additional problems could result because the twenty-four hour on-the-premises security was replaced by a cheaper contract service, which merely drives by on nights and weekends. Most employees question the additional risk to people and government property which has resulted. Many women who work late now fear going to their cars at night. Any attack or related incident would not only traumatize the employee involved, it could result in costly litigation against the Bureau, and inestimable negative publicity.

Gates, which formerly secured the NIFC compound, were removed when the new NIFC building was erected. The gates have never been replaced, resulting in greater risk to personnel's safety and to loss of government property.

Employees reported that offices are often left unlocked after normal business hours, increasing the risk of theft. In addition, storage of fire fighting equipment against fences or on pallets and trailers outdoors are subject to increased risk of theft. Employees also reported that there is uncontrolled access to the aircraft flightline, buildings and equipment.

Employees reported additional concerns over an increased lack of security, including the following:

- a) A new LAWNET system to be installed in 1995 will increase the amount of sensitive information to be protected at the Center;
- b) Potential for huge financial losses from theft or vandalism to aircraft;
- c) A \$14 million plus fire cache inventory is subject to increased risk when parts of it are allowed to sit outside the warehouse unattended;
- d) Expensive, accountable property in the office buildings on base is subject to increased risk of loss;
- e) Potential liability for strangers and unauthorized individuals who are on base and may be injured (members of the public have been observed picnicking on the grounds over the weekend);
- f) There were several reports of a large backlog in background investigations for personnel working on base, including supply staff and ADP systems management personnel.

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Conduct a security threat assessment and determine the need for a comprehensive analysis of the security system and potential improvements.
2. Based on results of analysis in Recommendation 1 above, develop an action plan to implement needed improvements.
3. Conduct a property management Management Control Review that is comprehensive enough to measure effectiveness of the controls to prevent the misuse, theft, and security of government property.

Findings:

There is no active inspection element for the Boise Center's Occupational and Health safety program. While there is a person designated to handle such matters, the predominant focus is on fire safety. Environment safety issues have not been adequately addressed. As a result, some employees have been injured and exposed to unnecessary danger.

Employees reported having requested that safety pads be put on steps at Center buildings, but no action has been taken. In addition, an elevator in the administration building often drops 1 1/2 inches when people step inside. The elevator company has worked on it, but there continues to be a problem. Nothing has been done about taking that elevator out of service while the problem is addressed.

In addition employees reported cleaning equipment with noxious solvents in an unvented area. Exhaust fans have been repeatedly requested, but there has been no action taken. Likewise, these employees were not provided any additional safety equipment to protect them from such exposure. Other employees reported that they believe certain hazardous materials may be improperly stored on the base.

There is a lack of control in keeping employees outside of base services from entering the shop and picking up tools and using them improperly. Employees reported instances where sheet metal in the drill press was improperly secured. When the drill press was engaged, the sheet metal was thrown clear, and luckily did not injure anyone. However, the potential for severe injury is significant.

Other problems that were reported included: the noise level in the small engine shop is so loud that it is reportedly affecting the hearing of a couple of employees; two two-story buildings, the Remote Area Weather Station building and the electronic maintenance shop, have no adequate means of exit, via another set of stairs, in the event of fire; inadequate procedures for dealing with asbestos in situations where employees work with it; a ramp to a loading dock has been cited by employees as being dangerous (near collisions), the warehouse is also reported to be poorly ventilated, unsanitary and poorly lighted; and flammable liquid containers adjacent to small engine testing indoors that do not meet OSHA standards for signing (and possibly securing) to protect against ignition sources, including smoking.

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Conduct a formal assessment to identify and prioritize safety hazards across the entire base according to OSHA and other applicable safety standards.
2. Ensure specific remedial or mitigating actions are executed to eliminate immediate life and health threatening conditions.
3. Conduct an Environmental Compliance Assessment of Facilities (ECAAF), at the Boise Center, to inventory hazardous materials, their locations, condition and the adequacy of the procedures for controlling and handling them.
4. Develop and execute an action plan targeting resolution of lesser threatening situations.

CHAPTER II

COMMUNICATION

Worksheet 7.

Top Down Information Sharing

Findings:

Top management has been detached and exclusive and does not share sufficient information with the employees on organizational decisions or related information. The evaluation team consistently received feedback from employees on the inadequacy of both the quality and quantity of communications with top management at the NIFC and National Office. In response to the employee questionnaire, 78% of the respondents disagreed that "the resource protection management team stresses good communication throughout the organization" and 86% disagreed that "important resource protection management team issues/decisions are clearly communicated to employees." Currently this has resulted in a high level of distrust of management's motives and decisions. Examples that the team found that relate to this finding include:

- a) One employee was detailed full time to work with an interagency software application group, and the supervisor heard about it through the grapevine.
- b) Staffing decisions were made by the top two management officials of the directorate. There was no management team involvement to discuss staffing priorities and FTE allocations.
- c) The management team attended an off-site planning session in Sun Valley and established goals and objectives. However, that work was not carried forward in any uniform fashion to employees, and there was no evidence that it was visibly linked to decision processes.
- d) All employee meetings are infrequent and many employees feel they do not provide substantive, useful information.
- e) The base newsletter "Smoke Signals" is not considered substantive or informative and employees seem indifferent to it.
- f) The employees did not know of the AVADS, Automated Vacancy Announcement Distribution System, perhaps because only two copies of the weekly department vacancy announcement update are distributed and/or because employees are unaware of computer access to the system through division staff assistants.
- g) Minutes generally are not disseminated from the management team staff meetings so employees are not aware of events or information that is discussed in that forum.
- h) Employees widely expressed their understanding that awards and recognition were rare and inequitably distributed. However, cursory review of monetary awards for the last two years reveal equitable distribution across divisions.

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Develop a communications plan that addresses the lack of top-down communications. The plan should consider all forms of communications i.e., management team meeting notes, subordinate unit staff meetings, the "Smoke Signals" newsletter, bulletin boards, and all employee meetings.
2. Form an employee committee to help management review the communications plan, keep it current, and to suggest topics for all employee meetings and newsletter articles.
3. Establish a Personnel Management Committee (PMC) composed of the management team to make all personnel and FTE related decisions and communicate decisions to the employees.
4. Encourage management and employee use of E-mail to "flatten" the communications chain where possible.

Findings:

The bottom-up communication process is near nonexistent in both the National Office and the NIFC. The communication process must work both up and down for an organization to achieve its best potential. Often the best ideas that an organization has will come from the individual staff level because they are most knowledgeable of the processes they are required to do. The employees of the NIFC and the National Office do not believe that the communications process works very well upward through the organization. Examples include:

a) Several employee groups commented that they had developed issue papers and had written decision proposals for signature at the NIFC Director or Assistant Director level but they never received a decision or usable feedback on their documents in order to get a decision.

b) Employees did not feel that top management was open or that employee input was welcome. Requests by employees for meetings with top management were not met very timely or enthusiastically accepted.

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Project openness and more concern for the organization's employees in a number of ways, such as, hallway conversations, visits to employee worksites, or endorse an open door policy.
2. Get employee feedback on effectiveness of the changes implemented using an employee committee, a questionnaire, or an all employee meeting discussion or some other process.
3. Ensure that feedback on employee work products is timely provided. Where no decision is made, provide the rationale for this action.

Findings:

Even though, in many cases, employees have established their own informal lines of communication in order to get information and assistance to accomplish their work, communication across division lines is difficult. Minimal communication across division lines leads to disruption of the work force and employees feel used and left out of the decision process that affects them. Examples include:

- a) Information from the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) is disseminated on a need to know basis. Some employees are told they don't need to know.
- b) Some division staffs do not believe they receive adequate support from other parts of the organization. Much of this conflict centers on lack of customer understanding of division workloads.
- c) There were examples of division chiefs circumventing each other. One took a work request straight to an employee in another division without regard for the disruption it would cause in the employee's work unit. Another got top management approval to use an employee from another division for his project without any consultation.

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

- 1. Institute an operating principle to involve managers and employees in decisions that affect them. All employees can participate in incorporating this principle in their daily operations. Service organizations can seek customer participation in establishing prioritizing tools and other customer response mechanisms. Clear two-way communication of both customer needs and servicing capabilities is key in improving strained relationships across divisions.
- 2. Establish an organizational team decision process that demonstrates to employees and supervisors that the team approach is the preferred way.
- 3. Top management should continuously reinforce to all employees a team management philosophy and what is expected in order to improve the communication problem.

CHAPTER III

HUMAN RESOURCES

Worksheet 10.

Training/Career Development

Findings:

Formal training and career development activities are generally a low priority throughout the subject offices. An exception is the smoke jumpers who actively seek training to improve fire job performance and to enhance qualifications for promotions. The situation can be expected to deteriorate due to FTE reduction and its impact on trainee positions and the availability of employees for developmental details.

The NIFC and the National Office have an established Education Awards Program. Supervisory promotion, application and support for this program are inconsistent across the organization, however, and employees who travel extensively during semester periods cannot take advantage of the program.

Many employees believe that training opportunities are insufficient, and some are concerned that supervisors and the Personnel Office are not providing adequate and effective counseling on training courses to plan a strategy for career development.

The NIFC and the National Office do not have a formal policy for training, career development or job enrichment.

As a result, the training and career development program is ineffective in meeting most employee needs. Planning for training is not realistic, and employees in well funded areas tend to get the best training regardless of comparative need. This conveys the notion that management is not concerned with the training and career development of employees in the organization, with the exception of Fire Suppression. Skills in essential supervisory, interpersonal, and non-technical areas may be lacking, adversely affecting the work environment and lowering of employee morale.

Examples include: a) in three divisions, employees stated that no one has an Individual Development Plan and b) supervisors prepare annual training plans with no expectation of accomplishing them. Also, 45% of the employee questionnaire respondents indicated that "supervisors did not provide career development opportunities."

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Establish a formal policy for the organization's training and career development program. This policy should provide uniform criteria for prioritizing training needs.
2. Establish and communicate the yearly training budget.

Worksheet 11. Administrative/EEO Complaint Processes

Findings:

Employees are unfamiliar with EEO complaint and administrative grievance processes in use for the NIFC and the National Office. As a result of complaint process unfamiliarity, employees feel as though there is no effective recourse to address their concerns or complaints. This contributes to frustration, confusion and lower morale.

The team found evidence of isolated cases of sexual harassment and other types of harassment. While the NIFC and National Office do not condone sexual harassment, it seemed uncertain that harassment cases were timely addressed and effectively resolved.

The last comprehensive EEO training for the entire organization occurred in 1991. EEO training was provided for three divisions between 1991 and 1994. This training was provided to educate employees about sexual harassment and as a partial remedy for addressing EEO complaints. There is no evidence to substantiate that administrative grievance training has occurred. Many employees indicated that complaint options and processes are not publicized or commonly known among NIFC employees.

Recommendations:

The Assistant Director Resource Protection and the NIFC Director should:

1. Establish and distribute an informational brochure to employees on the EEO complaint and Administrative Grievance processes.
2. Conduct comprehensive EEO and Administrative Grievance training and Alternative Dispute Resolution training for the EEO Counselor.
3. Include sexual harassment sensitivity in comprehensive EEO training which involve attendees in discussions of appropriate and inappropriate behavior in their work settings.

What Employees Think:
The Two Most Important Things To Do Now!

- Needs to be a "Vision" and "Mission" articulated as to what the center should be and its direction
- Set and tie resource priorities into the mission of NIFC
- We need Organizational stability - lets quit reorganizing!
- Improve the Communication channels - be more open on decision making
- Make a clearer delineation of NIFC and National responsibilities
- Communicate the management team decisions to employees and why the decisions were made and responsive on follow through
- Top management must be more visible and more accessible "open door policy"
- Clear authority of both the NIFC and the Assistant Director of Resource Protection
- Need strong leadership to pull us back together
- Unite the center, pull employees back together/family
- The management team must lead by example
- Management needs to be more personable
- Train mid level managers and have them mentor 1st line managers and supervisors
- Develop policy for training, 10% of budget!
- Management must take an interest in employees and what they do
- Improve collaboration with the Executive Leadership Team and clarify with them the mission of NIFC
- Better integration of Law Enforcement and resource management
- Clarify relationships and priorities between non-NIFC staffs
- Get the corporate board out to NIFC to visit
- Place more emphasis on the Bread and Butter of operations
- Get rid of the non-producers
- Get rid of the duplication of effort among agencies
- We should be a flagship program
- Level the playing field - allocate resources more equitably to accomplishments
- Expand the area of consideration for NIFC job vacancies
- Demonstrate trust and respect for employees and recognize them as a valuable resource by consulting them and Involve employees more in the decision making
- Work leaner - less bureaucratic
- Management needs to be fair, enough of the "good ole boy"
- Reestablish professional links with the National program
- Plant the lawn
- Delegate correspondence signing and improve timeliness
- Solutions based on facts not politics
- Look ahead not back
- Investigate sharing technology with other disciplines

Summary Results of
General Management Evaluation Questionnaire (GMEQ)
Law Enforcement, Fire, Aviation

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Law Enforcement-Fire-Aviation
Questionnaire Analysis
September 1994

I. Introduction

In July 1994, 200 questionnaires were distributed to all full time employees in the BLM Resource Protection Directorate including the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). For the purpose of this report both divisions will be identified as the Boise Center. The due date for returning the questionnaires was September 15, 1994. The cut-off date for entering the questionnaire data into the computer was September 21, 1994. A total of 93 of the 200 questionnaires were returned within that time frame for a 47% rate of return, sufficient for a statistical analysis. A comparison of the sample demographics with the demographics of the total staff suggests that there is a sufficient level of response from each organizational component to conclude that the results can be taken as representative of the entire Boise Center staff.

This report presents an analysis of the responses. The actual percent (tally) for each level of each item follow this report.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to survey staff as to their satisfaction with management direction and internal communication at the Boise Center. The actual selection of issues, the findings and the recommendations will be made by the evaluation team based on this data, on-site interviews, and a review of relevant documents.

The Boise Center is responsible for headquarters level programs in law enforcement and aviation and the National Interagency Fire Center which is the nation's logistical support center for wildfire suppression. Through careful planning and efficient interagency management system, the five major federal land and resource management agencies -- Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service -- along with the National Weather Service, work together to respond to wildfire and other emergencies. Fiscal Year funding for the Boise Center was approximately \$21 million. Staffing for the Center as of August 1994 was approximately 200 full time positions with few vacancies.

II. Methodology

Each item in the questionnaire is written as a positive statement, and respondents are instructed to show their level of agreement or disagreement, or to mark that they either don't know or the item is not applicable to them. Care was taken in the design of the questionnaire to only inquire about areas in which a majority of the staff would have an informed opinion. However, as with any questionnaire, it is expected that each item will have a certain amount of non-responses. About 90% of the respondents responded to each item, but the range was from 48% response on some technical items to 100% response on some items regarding supervision, work unit, PIPRs, training, and IRM. If the level of No Response is large enough to affect validity, warning is provided.

A mean score is computed by giving 1 point for each strongly agree response, 2 for agree, 3 for disagree, 4 for strongly disagree, adding the points and then dividing by the number of responses. Similarly, the various responses for a group of items can be computed to produce a mean for the

group of items. The use of means allows the differing levels of agreement and disagreement to be pulled together into a single score which can be used for rank orderings.

In evaluations where questionnaires are used, ratings of 1.9 or less are traditionally seen as superior performance. Ratings of 2.0 to 2.3 are seen as the average variation within the full performance level, as the equivalent of less than a third of the respondents are indicating disagreement with the positive statements in the questionnaire. Ratings of 2.4 to 2.6 are seen as possible problem areas, roughly equivalent to one third to two thirds of the respondents are indicating disagreement. Ratings of 2.7 or greater mean that at least two thirds of the respondents are indicating disagreement, strongly equivalent of everyone disagreeing, with enough strongly disagreeing to mathematically cancel out those who agree or strongly agree.

III. Summary Analysis

A. General Perspective:

The principal indication from the questionnaire is that the Resource Protection Management Team (RPMT) is not effective at planning, directing, and controlling the resources at the Boise Center. Every item under section IA "Quality Management, Resource Protection Management Team," with the exception of one (RPMT, is committed to providing top quality services/results, 42% disagreement), received greater than 52% disagreement. This is serious in that each item/statement in the questionnaire under "Quality Management" section I represents the principles of leadership and quality management. The bright side of the questionnaire results are that individual work units and work unit supervision is within the normal range of full performance. Even though the scores are in the normal range a majority of the items under "work unit supervision" is right on the edge of "potential problem areas." It is important to recognize that improvement needs to be made by these individuals now to avoid problems later. The questionnaire results also indicate that EEO and personnel are within the normal range of full performance with the exception of "personnel selections are made on the basis of merit." Other areas of concern are: recognition/awards, career counseling, commitment to quality, and having clerical support.

B. Rank Order of Sections:

The following table shows the mean scores for each major section of the questionnaire starting with the lowest (best) scores to the highest (worst) scores:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Mean</u>	
I B	Quality Management, Work Unit	2.12	normal
II A	Human Resource Management, Personnel/EEO/AEP	2.18	
I C	Quality Management, Work Unit Supervision	2.21	
I A	Quality Mgmt. Resource Protection Mgmt. Team	2.88	problem area

As mentioned earlier, means of less than 2.0 are considered superior, means of 2.0 to 2.3 are considered the normal range of full performance, 2.4 to 2.6 are considered potential problem or caution areas, and greater than 2.7 are problem areas.

C. Positive Scores:

It is encouraging to note that overall the Quality Management sections for individual work units and work unit supervisors and EEO/AEP were rated good. The results of the questionnaire indicate that the individual work unit supervisors are doing an overall good job with planning, supervising, and directing the work in their respective units. Overall these positive scores are indicators of good communicative, collaborative, committed, well focused, and dedicated employees.

D. Caution Areas:

This section of the report is a rank order of the items in the survey with which there is the most disagreement. The percent of strongly agree is combined with the percent of agree and the percent of disagree with strongly disagree, then the total percent of disagreement is reported. This type of rating disregards the degree of agreement or disagreement, but is more sensitive to whether the majority is agreeing or disagreeing.

The following are the items, questions from the questionnaire, with the highest (worst) scores in the Boise Center Special Evaluation, presented in rank order starting with the worst. In all of these items there was at least 40% disagreement. The rank of means is an indication of the proportion of strong disagreement.

<u>Mean</u>	<u>% dis-</u> <u>agree</u>	<u>Item #</u>	<u>GME Question</u>
3.2	79%	1l	RPMT, fosters an atmosphere that enhances employee morale
3.2	86%	5	Important resource protection management team issues/decisions are clearly communicated to employees
3.1	77%	1f	RPMT, functions effectively as a team
3.1	76%	1h	RPMT, makes adjustments to match staffing with workloads
3.1	78%	1i	RPMT, stresses good communication throughout the organization
3.1	80%	1j	RPMT, assures good coordination among programs
2.9	65%	1a	RPMT, establishes clear goals and objectives for resource protection
2.9	71%	1b	RPMT, establishes clear priorities
2.9	79%	1c	RPMT, regularly reviews the organization's progress towards accomplishing its goals and objectives

2.9	72%	1e	RPMT, sets an example of quality through performance
2.9	72%	3	Mgmt. decisions are made based upon reliable information, data, and analysis
2.9	72%	13	Personnel actions in the Boise Center are made on the basis of merit
2.8	65%	4	Resource protection functional roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
2.7	56%	1g	RPMT, is accessible to staff
2.7	65%	2	A focus on continuous improvement is part of all operations and activities
2.7	58%	7	Staff is aware of the overall mission of the office
2.6	52%	1k	RPMT, ensures that appropriate steps are taken to protect government resources from waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement
2.6	56%	6	The resource protection external customers are satisfied with the services provided
2.5	41%	11g	Supervisor provides you, recognition/awards when deserved
2.5	45%	11i	Supervisor provides you, career development opportunities
2.4	42%	1d	RPMT, is committed to providing top quality services/results
2.4	40%	8c	In work unit, have enough time to perform your job in a professional manner
2.4	40%	9c	Work unit effective at, providing clerical support

E. Section by Section:

I.B. Quality Management, Work Unit

This area is one of the most basic to effective productivity and it received fairly positive scores (2.12), again almost total agreement. There was high ratings for: being encouraged to find ways to improve the way of doing things and in obtaining results, knowing and caring about your customers, and managing multiple priorities. This section also received good marks for: employees working together to solve problems, accomplishing planned work, allocating funds to planned work, and collaborating with other work units to accomplish the highest priority work.

Of note is the less than desirable rating for having enough time to perform your job in a professional manner. Only 60% of the respondents indicated they had enough time to do a professional job. This could be a signal for management to better prioritize the Boise Center and individual units workload or for employees to receive training or assistance in organizing their workload.

II.A. Human Resource Management, Personnel/EEO/AEP

Overall, this is a very positive area of the questionnaire. The section received a rating of 2.18 indicating almost total agreement with the statements in this section. This results from the large number of strongly agree mathematically canceling out the few strongly disagree. A caution is appropriate here in that we don't know exactly where the strongly disagrees are coming from. This could be important if the disagreement is mostly from one group of people.

Nearly 80% of all respondents agree to the statements in this section. Employees generally believe that the Boise Center AEP/EEO program is effective at overcoming under-representation of minorities, women, and handicapped. A few written comments suggested that the hiring has gone to far and EEO is used to threaten supervisors. Supervisors avoid making and discourages the use of sexist, racist, and agist, remarks by others. Only 70% of the employees agree that the "Resource Protection employees are free from sexual harassment." Once again, this was mentioned in written comments that there is still harassment in the office. This is an area that the evaluation team needs to investigate.

A weakness in this section is that only 28% of the respondents believed that "personnel actions are made on the basis of merit." Several respondents also mentioned that they believe there was unfair hiring practices. This is another area for additional investigation.

I.C. Quality Management, Work Unit Supervision

The items in this section represent critical management duties that are paramount to successfully lead and manage an office and which received fair ratings. The overall score for this section was 2.2 which is close to total agreement with the statements. Again, the disagreements are mathematically canceled out by the strongly agree. 70% or more of the respondents believe that their supervisor is effective at organizing the work, helping solve problems, providing ideas on improvement, delegating work and holding employees accountable, encouraging new ideas, providing challenging assignments, encouraging open two-way communication, setting reasonable deadlines, and resolving conflict

resolution. Areas that are right on the edge of being problems include planning and directing the workload, providing clear roles and direction, creating a positive, healthy work environment, and having enough space to do your work. Employees making written comments also suggested that individual work unit supervisors could do a better job of coordinating their work.

It appears that the RPMT needs to pay some prompt attention to fostering a more healthy organizational climate in which employees collaborate with one another in accomplishing work, providing recognition, and providing career opportunities. The preceding weaknesses were also mentioned by a number of respondents. Just over 50% of the respondents agreed with the previous statements. This could be an indication of some unhealthy competition and/or turf protection or another indication of too much or lack of prioritization of work.

I.A. Quality Management, District Management Team

Six of the 18 items in this section received a mean of over 3.1 (> 76% disagreement) which mathematically is total disagreement in which the strongly disagree cancels out agrees and strongly agrees. Three quarters of the respondents disagreed that the RPMT: fosters an atmosphere that enhances morale, communicates important decisions to employees, functions as an effective team, makes workload adjustments, and stresses good communication throughout the organization. Another 8 items received approximately two thirds disagreement in management areas of: establishing clear goals and objectives and priorities, communicating, following up on progress relating to goals and priorities, setting the example of quality, making decisions based on reliable information and analysis, and making personnel decisions based on merit. There was also a majority of disagreement over "the RPMT is available to staff, staff is aware of the overall mission, RP external customers are satisfied with the service provided, and ensures that steps are taken to protect government resources against waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. There were over 20 written comments related to managements lack of leadership, poor communication, lack of followup on previous evaluations, lack of visibility and accessibility, and lack of interest in the Boise Center.

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